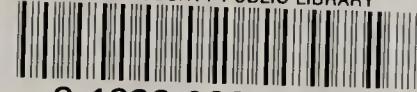


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A sketch of the life of  
George W. Matthes

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A SKETCH OF THE LIFE  
OF  
GEORGE W. MATTHES

BY  
GEORGE W. MATTHES  
1937



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A SKETCH OF THE LIFE

of

E. W. MATTHES

\* \* \*

I was born in Rusavilla, Indiana, May 19, 1859. My family moved to Wisconsin in the year of 1861, the year the Civil War broke out. I was  $1\frac{1}{2}$  years old then. There were seven children and mother: five boys and two girls. The youngest one was six months old, and the oldest one was about 12 years old. My father died in October of the same year. At that time he had raised a round log house and a round log barn.

At that time it was bitter cold. The winters in those early days were more severe than now. I have seen it to be 60 degrees below zero, and it was not uncommon to see the snow from 4 to 6 feet deep every winter. It would drift up over all the roads, and we could not see a single rail fence. I have seen snow drifts from 10 to 20 ft. high. One year I know it started in at 40 degrees below zero the first of January and never varied two degrees in the 31 days of that month. My father was a doctor in his home town. He had never done any clearing of land or farming, but there were about five or six families from Indiana who had moved to Wisconsin and wanted him to come there too, and there were several more families that came later. Since my father was not accustomed to such work in storms and bitter cold weather, he exposed himself and got very ill and died that same winter and left mother with those seven children.

The Civil War had just broken out, leaving us in the green woods without money or relatives and right at that time there was not an able-bodied man in the country. They were all in the U.S. Service. There were a few old men, too old for the service, and a few boys who were too young. It was almost impossible to get any help. If you did get one of these old men to do a day's work, it would cost you about \$10.00 a day. Mother had an old man to make a 7-pin Yankee wooden sled. She furnished everything and he was less than a half of a day making it. He charged her \$5.00. Wheat was about \$3.00 per bushel; flour, from \$12.00 to \$15.00 a barrel; pork on foot was \$12.00 per hundred. Calico, 25¢ per yard; matches, 25¢ per box. These are just a few examples of the prices of things in the Civil War days, and other things were in proportion.

My folks settled on 120 acres,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles SE of Viola, in Richland County, Wisconsin. The school was an old round log house. The benches were slabs, with the bark on the under side, and two inch holes were bored in the slab for the legs. In the winter the big boys

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carried these old slab benches closer to the old stove, yet the little children almost froze to death. This school was  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from our house. It was almost impossible for small children to go to school during the hard winters because they had to walk. The only kind of teams we had were ox teams. When the snow was very deep, we could not go to school at all, unless it would sleet. Then there would be a crust on the snow on which we could walk. At those times we would walk on drifts ten feet deep. During the summer we had to stay home and work, so that we would have something for the next winter. When I look back I wonder how the children got any schooling at all, under such circumstances. But all of us got a good common school education. Then, too, we educated ourselves. Here, I suppose, the reader is wondering how mother raised her children in the days of the Civil War, when food was so high priced.

It seems like a miracle that she was able to rear five children, and manage a farm. When my father died we had the 120 acres paid for, also two cows and one horse. Mother traded the horse for a yoke of three year old steers, not broke. The oldest boy was twelve years old, and the other was ten: John, and Charley. Charley (c. 7) is living at this writing. He is 83 years old. My oldest brother, John, died in about 1880. Before father died he had ten acres of heavy timber chopped off smooth. Some trees were four feet through, and a man could walk all over this ground on stumps. My two older brothers had to break in those three steers so that they could plow in these stumps with a jump shovel plow. Probably, some of the readers don't know what a jump shovel plow is. It is a big single plow with a colter, or some call it a cutter, which runs from the point of the plow up through the beam and made sharp to cut the roots. Sometimes the roots would be cut in two and fly back and crack your shins.

I stated before that my father had a log house and a round log barn when he died. The round log house was daubed with straw and mud. It was built on a hillside and was about two or three feet from the ground at the low part; the neighbors came and banked the house for us. The mud daubing later fell out and the house became dreadfully cold. We had a fireplace and an old stone chimney. It burned four feet wood and it took about a half a cord to run it all night. I have seen it so cold that if water was spilled on the table, it would freeze immediately. Then mother and the older ones would have to turn the table up to the fireplace to thaw the ice from the table. Mother had to keep the baby wrapped in a quilt and lay it in the corner by the fireplace to keep it from freezing to death. The old log house was cobbled up with log on log, put across the roof every three feet to nail the shakes or clapboards on. The men, who made the roof, went into the woods and got a nicely grained oak. They cut it down and made blocks three feet long, and then split them out. Some would be two inches thick and some would be one half inch thick, so you can see it wouldn't make a tight roof with these clapboards from one log to another. You could always look up and see the stars at night. Sometimes we would wake up in the morning and find eight or ten inches of snow on our beds; but as luck would have it, mother

After  
Utah  
Journey

Aunt  
Sarah  
Emily



had lots of quilts.

What did we wear? Well, I'll tell you what we wore. Mother managed to get a few sheep and she and the older boys would shear them with house shears. One would hold them down while the other would shear them. Then we would yoke up the steers and start to the cording machine which was ten or fifteen miles, with the wool. We would take lunch with us, and start out in the night so that we would get back with the roles. These wool roles were one foot long and about one half inch thick. Mother and my oldest sister would spin those roles into yarn. Mother had a loom and wove that yarn into clothes and knit our stockings. I was eighteen years old before I ever had a suit of tailor-made clothes, or a factory made sock. That is what we wore--girls and boys, and mother, also.

In regard to our food--the first year father died they planted a small patch of corn and tomatoes. They dug it in around the stumps and raised pretty good corn and a little garden. We managed to get through the next winter by eating corn bread. We were too proud to take corn bread to school because some made fun of us, so we very often went without dinner. In regard to meat--we usually had pork. In the spring when the shoats were big enough to weigh 50 or 100 pounds, the folks would take their dogs and chase the pigs way out into the woods, three or four miles away from home. They would see nor more of them until fall. All of the pigs would be earmarked, and have the ear mark registered; then in the fall the neighbors would have a round up and each neighbor would claim his hogs by the ear mark. They would get pretty fat on mesh and acorns. Sometimes the hogs would get mad when they were driven. One time I remember being with the men on a round up. They told me some times the hogs would charge on us. I was only ten years old, then, but I knew I was a good climber so I went along. When we got way out in the woods, there was an old sow that had young pigs and here they came!! I went up a tree like a squirrel. I had a dog with me, and I told him to go home. He did, but the hogs took after him and went out of sight, so I came down from the tree and went home. Sometimes the men would shoot the hogs in the woods and dress them right there if they became too wild and hard to handle. This too they would haul home and use for their meat.

Now, about our foot wear. We had a neighbor who was a shoemaker. He lived about a half mile from our place. We would go and he would take our measurements, and make our shoes out of cowhide--the heaviest that could be bought, and they would get as hard as sole leather. The shoe tops were very low and they would get so hard that we had to kick on the toes every morning to get them on. I have gone to school many a day without a cap, or coat, and my shoes were full of snow and my ankles next to the snow. There was no such a thing as an overshoe, or at least, not way out there.

In regard to sugar,-- we made our own sugar and molasses. One year in about 1870 we were all seven at home yet and we tapped about 1800 maple trees and made 1600 pounds of maple sugar and two barrels of maple syrup. We carried the maple sugar over to Jerry Clark's about six miles out on Camp Creek where the big spring was and sold it for 10¢ a pound. This Jerry Clark had a store and gave a little more for sugar and that is why we went there to sell it. I have seen mother take what shgar she



could carry and walk up there and sell it and walk back and think nothing about it. The reason we did not take the team was that we only had a yoke of cattle and probably they were busy. At any rate she could go quicker by foot than with that team. Our maple syrup we sold for 50¢ to \$1.00 a gallon, so that was one way we made a little spending money. We also dug gensing in the early days. There were lots of this in the woods, also goldenseal. When we boys wanted to go to a celebration or needed a little money we would pick up our gensing hoes and start out in the woods. It didn't make any difference if it was raining; in fact, that was generally the case, because when the weather was nice we had to work on the farm. We would get 10¢ a pound for this just as we dug it and a little more if we washed it. I don't think they bought goldenseal at that time. It was Godsend that the good Lord provided that gensing to grow in the woods, for many a newcomer would have perished for the want of some way of making a little money when the early settlers first came, as there was no other way.

Now, then, I have told you in this sketch how we earned our bread, how mother spun and wove all the clothes we wore, and how we got our pork by chasing the pigs and old hogs way out in the woods and fattening them on mash and acorns, and how we made maple sugar and syrup, the prices we got, how we got our footwear, and the perils we had to undergo on our way to school, and how we were handicapped in education, and now I will tell you how we got our tea and coffee.

There was a winter green hill about two miles away from our house and we would go there and gather wintergreens and dry them. We used this dried wintergreen for store tea, and for coffee mother would brown wheat and grind that and that was our coffee. This was from 1861 to 1867.

People on big farms and fine buildings are howling now about hard times---in 1933 and later. These people don't know what hard times are. If they would stay at home and work and look after business a little and quit running around for pleasure and quit sitting in a car seat, but would hitch their team to the cultivator and go out in the field and work, I believe they would have better corn. Through all these hardships mother had in raising her seven children during the Civil War, no one ever gave her a cent or she never begged a meal, and always had something to eat or did without a meal. So you can see those farmers who are howling hard times are just dilatory.

About 1873 we traded the yoke of oxen for a black mare. We called her Cole. We had one mare colt. Mr. Carl Long, a relative of the family, had a horse and we got it to work with our colt. This Mr. Long married a cousin by the name of Nancy Cooper. They lived at Spring Valley at that time. Before we got this wagon there was a man who came along and wanted to stay a while with us; and while he was there he said, "You folks have no wagon, so I will make you folks one. Every place you go you have to drag and old pin sled with cattle." So he made us one. He went out into the woods and cut a big oak tree about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet through and sawed off blocks about one foot long, then bored a hole through the center about three inches in diameter. He took his ax and tapered the ends of the blocks down to about three inches where it ran on the ground. That made the wheels. The rest of it was built a good deal like any other wagon. I will tell the world it beat dragging an old pin sled through the mud. Now when we got our new team of horses and our new wagon, things began to go different. We thought we were rich. We took



mighty good care of our horse and waggon.

In 1874 we cleared and put in wheat. I was the youngest boy of the five and at that time I was fifteen years old and so you see we were all at home and had a pretty good force to work with. At that time we had about forty or forty-five acres cleared, but still there were a great many stumps. We all worked together. I would go to school in the winter and work on the farm in the summer. The older boys had many more hardships to endure than I.

In 1875 mother decided to build a new frame house so we dug the cellar, the full size of the house, about 18' x 24', two stories high. We hired a man to lay the rock and his name was Solley. Mr. Solley, my brother Charley, and a man named Pelton built the house. We were getting along fine and mother and my oldest brother John got dissatisfied and decided to go on further. That was the year of 1876.

Mother had a sale and sold everything and rented the 120 acres for three years to a man named Si Walters. This was in the same year of 1876. In the spring I was 17 years old so we hired a man to take us to Richland Center, the county seat of Richland County, and when we got there we bought our tickets to Lone Rock and we had to ride on a narrow gauge railroad with wooden rails about half as wide as a regular track. They did not have anything but box cars for passengers to ride in and they had just common chairs for the passengers to sit on. The ride was so rough that it was hard to keep from tipping over.

Lone Rock is on the main line of the Union Pacific. We bought our tickets to Chicago and from there to a place called York and that was as far as the Union Pacific went at that time.

In 1876 the Indians were hostile. You know that year was the year of Custer's Last Stand and his whole army was massacred. When we got to York we had to get out and take our baggage for the eight of us. This York was a very small place and we had to have something to eat. There was a little hardware store where we bought a little cook stove. We were right in the sand and the wind was blowing a hurricane and everything Mother tried to cook would be full of sand or the wind would blow the pans off the stove. There was a family nearby who had a tent and mother asked them if she could get behind the tent opposite the wind, and they said she could. Mother did manage to fix a little food for us, but it was about half sand anyway.

This town York, is in Montana about 100 miles from where we wanted to go. Mother wrote to a freighter at Mount Pleasant, Utah, and sent the letter with the Pony Express rider and we had to wait there about a week before the freighter came. We had to sleep on the ground or rather sand, and



and rocks. It was almost impossible to cook on the stove. You can imagine how it would be trying to cook on a stove out on a bleak desert with the sand blowing till a person could hardly see. It worked more hardships on mother and the girls than us boys. That week seemed about a month. We were out on a lonely Montana desert, and had to listen to the weird howling of the wolves.

But finally, two freight wagons came with twomen and two teams. Well, we loaded up our belongings. Each one of us had a big trunk, which made eight in all, and a big box. Eight of us, eight big trunks, and one big box. There wasn't room for us all to ride, so the women folks would ride and we boys had to walk. We walked along the desert in the blowing sand until night, and finally we stopped by a little stream of water. It was hard to tell whether we were negroes or white boys.

Well, we washed up and got a good square meal. Then we felt better and if you had ever seen hungry boys, we were ones. We were down in a canyon where the wind did not blow much and there was no sand. So the freightmen built a big fire and got out their frying pans, and started getting supper. It seemed as if I would starve before they got it ready. They had ham, eggs, and coffee. It seemed that this was the best meal I had ever eaten. They had tin pans to eat out of, and tin cups to drink our coffee from. Well, we got one helping around, but we wanted more and the freighters fried more until we had about three helpings. The men said, "For Lord's sake, are you never going to get filled up?"

We were not accustomed to walking all day. When supper was over the wagons were pulled in a circle, and someone had to stand guard for the Indians. You know that the Sioux Indians were very hostile, because just a month before this Sitting Bull, with his warriors over here on the mouth of Little Big Horn, massacred Custer and his whole army.

That fact, frightened mother and the girls, but it did not bother me any. So they spread the blankets down between the wagons and the two men stood guard. I think they had a revolver for each one, but this would not have meant anything if the Indians had wished to make a charge. I went to sleep and forgot all about Indians, and it seemed like I never slept better in my life. And as good fortune would have it, the next morning I woke up feeling fine. For breakfast we had the ham and coffee again. I was still hungry, and ate about three helpings. We got ready to start about eight o'clock the second day and it was the same old thing, "walk". But it wasn't quite so bad walking in the mountains because we didn't have the sand and the wind to contend with.

After we had gotten down in Echo Canyon, I saw where the buildings had been burned and it looked like there were fresh mounds in the grass. I asked one of the men what had been going on down there. He said that a squatter, or homesteader, had lived there and the Indians had massacred the whole family. He showed us graves and burned buildings all the way.



Emily +  
Sarah

In the evening of the second day, my two sisters decided they wanted to walk with me so we started out ahead of the teams and pretty soon we were out of sight. We kept going and didn't think much about it. Pretty soon we came to two roads. Instead of sitting down and waiting, we took the wrong road and were lost. So then we sat down and thought we would wait for the teams and we waited until dark and the teams went the other road. The wolves were howling close around us and my sisters huddled close to me. Courageously I took out my old knife and said it was no use to cry, that if we had to die, I would die fighting. We ran back about a mile and got on the right road. When the rest of the folks started to camp, mother asked where we were and the teamsters said we had gone ahead. Mother was awfully frightened and she lit a lantern to hang on one of the wagons, and just as soon as she lit it, we happened to see it. So then we started running and soon we were there. We certainly didn't let much grass grow under our feet in getting there, either.

This second night in the mountains was just about the same old routine but we were not quite so hungry. But after I got started eating, I had a strong appetite and could not see much difference in the eating. Well, they ran the wagons in a circle as before and spread the blanket between the wagons and the two freighters stood guard again. At that place there were two springs. One was as bitter as gall, and the other one was good, cool, and sweet. The one was called Bitter Creek. I think it would strangle a person to drink a swallow. Still good luck was in our favor. No Indians had ever bothered us. We didn't even see one.

The morning of the third day everything was about the same as before, and everything went all right. That day we reached our destination. Then we bought our tickets for Salt Lake City. We had some friends there and he took us to his home. There we boys slept on the back porch. The next morning he took us up town to a Mormon tithing temple, where we could stay until we located a place to stay.

This tithing temple was awfully dirty. Full of sick people lying around on the floor, some on beds, some on blankets. No screens on the doors or windows and the house was full of flies. I got sick and we had to stay around there about a week until I got better. Otherwise, we would not have stayed there that long.

Then mother hired two more freighters to take us about forty miles south of Salt Lake City. The same old thing--walking--and that was the first day. The wind was blowing, and sand flying, but we did not sleep out in the open. About the time we were going to camp, we ran across a man who said he could find room for the women folk in the house and the boys could sleep in the haymow. Mother would not let me sleep in the haymow because I had been sick, so I, also, got to sleep in the house. This man had two wives and about sixteen children. There were two of about the same age and size all the way down. He had a big one room log house. I was pretty sick that night for I had been walking all day in the sand and dirt. I heard an awful noise in the night, so I looked up and in the light of a small lamp, I saw the two wives fighting and pulling each others hair. The man stopped them. The women were nice looking and so was the man. The children all looked cute, all the same size. That morning we pulled out early and I rode part of the time that day.



The second day we got to a little village called Mountain Green. We found an awfully nice man there who took us in and gave us a good meal, and beds. The first beds we had since we left Wisconsin.

The third day was walking, as usual. But we got to our destination--Mount Pleasant. We thought we would find land to homestead, but we were disappointed. Nothing we looked at was any good, so some of the older boys got work. Since I couldn't, I told mother I believed I would go to school. There was a Presbyterian High School and it was a good school. They charged \$5.00 for three months, but when I offered them the money, they wouldn't take anything because they said I had been going to school back in the states where they had free schools, and as I had been a good scholar, I could help around the school. They also gave me the books I had been studying.

Charley, my next oldest brother, stayed at Foundtaine Green at that nice man's house. The one I was telling you about.

Utah, you know, was a territory at that time, and so was Oklahoma. It was called Indian Territory. I got through the school and we decided to go to a mining camp called Cotton Wood, ten miles south of Salt Lake City. You could see the city, on some clear days, as good as you can see a distance of two miles in this country. This little town, Cotton Wood, has a population, I judge, of about three or four hundred. It consisted of mines and saloons. Everything was wide open and it was a tough bunch. One night in the west, when we were moving in a covered wagon, we stayed all night at what the men said was Hot Springs. And there was a cold spring right near. You could catch fish in one spring and cook them in the other. Well, when we got to Cottonwood, my older brothers hired out in the mines.

A smelter is a place where they melt all of the ores together in pig bullion, and they then would send the bullion to an Elissa office and the different metals extracted from it. Such as gold and silver. This special mine was principally of lead. Well, I wanted to work, and I was a miner, but they would not hire a man unless he was twenty-one years old unless their parents would sign a permit. I wanted mother to sign one, but she just wouldn't listen to me. Therefore, I did not get to work in the lead smelter. I suppose it was a good thing that they did not let boys under age work, because it was awfully unhealthy to work there. I know that some men would get leaded in two or three months and have to go to the hospital. I have seen them drawn in almost any shape. Then I hired out to work in a brick yard for one dollar a day and board for myself. Mother was running a boarding house at that time, so of course I boarded at home. The man that I was working for was a bigamist. He had two wives. His first wife was about his age, around fifty years old, and they had two grown children, a boy and a girl. His young wife, I judge, was about eighteen or twenty years old. So one Saturday evening the boy that was working for him and boarding with him began to yell and throw his hat in the air. I asked him what was the matter, and he said they were going to get to board with the young wife this week. I said, "Well, what of that?" They said they got better grub from the young wife. They boarded one week at the young wife's house and one at the old wife's house.



As I said before, mother ran a boarding house. In Cotton Wood she had two boarders, Jack Griffin, and a man we called Curtis. This Mr. Griffin was a man who enjoyed drinking to excess. Mother made both of these men agree that if they ever came to the house intoxicated they would have to leave. One Friday, on pay day, a group of men gathered at one of the saloons. I happened to pass this very saloon, and I noticed that they were all drunk and fighting. Some one had knocked Griffin down. I looked in and I saw him crawling along the side of the wall of the saloon. When he got to the door he started to run and two men ran after him. It was a real race. Griffin got only about a rod's start, but they could not catch him; they also did a great deal of swearing. He beat them hom and locked himself in the bathroom. This all happened in the morning. When dinner was ready, I called him and he would not come, so when supper was ready I called and still he did not want to come. He said he wasn't hungry. So I said, "Jack, you will have to come out or I will kick the door in and drag you out." Then he came out, and mother discussed it with him. He left, and we have never seen him since.

Mr. Curtis drank some, but he never was really intoxicated. He was a nice fellow and he boarded with us as long as we stayed. He said he was coming to the states to look us up, but we never did see him after that. It was no uncommon thing, on pay day, to see six or eight rolling around in a pile, fighting like so many dogs, saloon keepers pulling them off of one another to keep them from killing each other. One nice thing, there wouldn't any of us five brothers ever drink with them. I went in a saloon with one of our boarders one evening and there was a big fellow dancing around and he said, "Everybody up to the bar." I remained sitting in a chair in the rear of the room. He saw me and said, "Get in here." I said, "No, thank you, I don't drink", and then he tried to make me drink a glass of whiskey. I saw another man start toward me and about the time he was going to try to force me to drink it, this other man hit him in the jaw and knocked him senseless. They pulled him out and he was lying there when I left. I thanked this man and he said that was the way he treated everybody who tried to make a boy drink who didn't want to. Now, when people stand up and say times are worse now than they were then, they are ignorant of those times. There was no law; only pistols and knives. If they found a man who was dead lying on the road, they would merely dig a hole and throw him in. This was in the 1877. We brothers got along fine, though, because we would not drink. People always think more of a man that doesn't drink.

As I have already said to you, I went to work in a brick yard. I was working there quite a while, and soon a big young man started picking on me. One day they brought fresh water on the yard. I picked up a cup and when I was drinking it he hit the cup and it spilled all over me. I said if he hit the cup again, I would throw the whole pail full on him. As I was going to drink again, he bumped the cup, and it spilled all over me again, so I picked up the pail and he said if I threw the water on him he would throw me in the river. There was a small river running near there, just about two or three rods away. I soused him with the pail of water and he grabbed me, and although I was only a kid, I fooled him. We scuffed around for about



ten minutes, and finally he dragged me to the bank and he gave me a big shove, thinking I would go without him, but he wen too. Ker-splash. I was quite a waterdog at that time and when he tried to hold me under the water he got fooled again. I dived under and got him by the legs and ha went under. I had him strangled pretty badly, so he grabbed at me but missed. So I went down and caught his legs again. The next time I let him have air, he was willing to get out. When he got out, I gathered up two big stones and chased him off the yard. The man for whom I worked was a brother-in-law to the man who attacked me. The boss asked his brother-in-law how the scuffle started, andthen they started to fight. Then they fell into the river. The man who threw me into the river got an awful beating again. The boss called on me to help, but I just let them beat till they stopped on their own accord. I was never bothered anymore with him. The boss fired him, and I have never seen him since.

I worked in this brick yard about three months and we decided to go back to Wisconsin. We had been gone almost a year. We went West in the spring of 1876 and came back in the spring of 1877. We went from Salt Lake City to Ogden, Utah, to buy our tickets because it was on the main line of the Union Pacific Railroad. Charley went into the ticket office to see what the ticket would cost, but did not buy them that evening. We were going straight to Chicago, Illinois. Next Morning he had to pay, if I remember rightly, about five dollars more for each ticket. But at any rate, he had to pay quite a little more. The old ticket agent was an old Utah Mormon and he saw that it was just a boy he was selling to, and he stole that much of our money.

When we got on the train bound for Chicago, the cars were awfully crowded. The conductor was another Utah Mormon and when he came into the car he grabbed people and said, "Three in a seat." Pretty soon he grabbed the wrong man. He go a hold of a soldier, who had been in the Civil War. He caught the old conductor by the throat and ran him in the corner, hit hem, end said, "D--- old Mormon, you can't do that to me. Now you order two extra cars and get them on right away, or I'll report you. And I don't mean maybe." So then we hed plenty of room. That man never wanted for cigars while he was on that train. This happened to be one of those old immigrant trains that used to take the immigrants across the plains. We were six days coming in from Ogden, Utah to Richland Center, Wisconsin. People would cook on a stove and sleep on the floor as if they were camping.

We got to Chicago at the time of the big strike, which was in 1877. At this time, the Government had to call out the malitis and saw the soldiers go out on the Lake in the ship of war. Well, they had a little scrimmage and several strikers were killed and that was the end of the strike.

After that, we bought our tickets to Maiden City, Iowa, and three of my brothers got off there to harvest wheat. That was the year of the big wheat harvest; it was the biggest yield anyone has ever seen, before or since. The rest of us went to Richland Center. Mother, my two sisters,



C. T. (she wanted I sell her out along)

one brother, and I. When we go t to Richland Center, people were so glad to see us that the man who runs the Park Hotel took us there, gave us supper, a night's lodging, and breakfast. That morning, my mother's sister came and we went home with Aunt Jane Trobaugh. Her first name was Cooper. They lived on a small farm about two miles from Richland. We stayed there about two weeks while we were at Aunt Janes's, as we always called her. I helped harvest their oats one Sunday, and right afterwards Charley and I went out in the woods and I think we found three bee trees. Then we hired a man and a team and wagon to come and get us. We went to our own farm later, of course it was rented for three years and we had only been gone a year so he still had it for two years. We tried to buy him off for the remaining two years but he wouldn't sell. The trip out west cost us just about two thousand dollars and that pretty well broke us up.

When we were coming from Richland Center, we came by Dan Bender's and they were cutting wheat along the road. They came out to the road to shake hands. Sam and his boy pulled me off of the wagon and said I would have to help them in harvest. I tried to get out of it, I told him I did not have my working clothes with me, and that I hadn't done very much hard work since I left and didn't believe I could do it anymore. I was soft and it was about one hundred fine in the sheaf. I told mother that I believed that I would try it a while anyway. She said, "George, I don't believe that you can stand it, but you can try if you want to." Dan told mother he wouldn't work me too hard, so we hunted up some everyday clothes, and I stayed there and the rest went on to Viola, Wisconsin. Well, that afternoon we started binding oats. You must remember that I was only seventeen years old at that time, but I was a good binder. I always had to keep up with the older boys who would cradle. I had to rake, bind, and that is where I shine. I wasn't afraid to go out into the field with any man. The next morning they go up early, and after breakfast I looked out of the window and saw five or six cradles. They all went out to pick out their cradles and left me and old Turkey Wing Cradle. Perhaps the reader doesn't know what a Turkey Wing Cradle is. It's a cradle with a straight scythe and it hangs out so that when you strike the grain, you can get four or five feet ahead in the grain. I think it must have been made for old Samson, or either those birds that it was made for must have been giants, or else they were very stout. The men all laughed when I had to take this cradle. I had never seen one before, but I had heard about them. There were very few in the country at this time. They were the first patent of the cradle after the old reap hook. This was an old Turkey Wing that had been handed down about one generation. So the old man said "Never mind, George, We will use the old Dutch Cradle." When we got up to the field the old man said for the rest to go ahead and we would bring up the rear. After they had all started work, I started, and I had to strike hard to make the cradle go through and I couldn't lay the swath straight and I scattered it all over. The men laughed again. The old man told me not to mind them, that I would soon get the hang of it. I stopped striking so hard and did not strike in the grain so far and was doing lots better by the time I got across that ten acre field. The rest were three or four rods ahead so they waited until I got out, then they started again and I was to bring up the rear. Well, I started again and I kept stroke with the men ahead, then the



old man had a laugh on them. He told them we were doing better work than they were. I wasn't doing better cradling than they, but the old man was doing better binding. He raked almost every head of grain up and made it look better. When we got across the end of the field one of the men said it was customary to take turn on the lead, so I said, "All right." I was pretty mad about that time. They had been making fun of me and leaving me that old cradle with home made fingers. It was red hot, about 100 degrees in the shade, and I noticed that my hands were blistering. I made up my mind to run that cradle that day or die in the attempt. So I started to lead, and if I would have been strong enough to put it through the grain the way it was hung, I would have gotten across the field before they were half way. But I wasn't able to do that. I would throw it in the grain just as far as I could and bring it around. I looked back and I saw I was gaining on the men so that when I got across I was about four rods ahead. Then the old man had the laugh on them again. I waited until they came through, then took my turn leading until night came. Those days, the farmers worked in the field as long as they could see, then do their chores by lantern light. It seemed as if it were never going to get dark. It seems, even now, that it was one of the longest days of my life. Here I was, a boy only 17 years old, who had not done any hard work for two years. My hands were as tender as a girl's, and I had never cradled much to speak of as I have already told you. I had never even seen a Turkey Wing Cradle. When night finally came, I was so tired I could hardly get down the hill. I was wringing with sweat. My hands were blistered and gauley. It was a good thing the boss told me I had done so well that I would not have to do any chores. I just went in and sat down. I never told anyone about my condition. When the old man asked me how I was feeling, I said, "Fine." We went to bed early, but I couldn't sleep my hands were hurting, and I ached all over. Next morning, I got up early and got breakfast. I asked Mrs. Bender if she would get me a couple of small rags. She asked me what the matter was, so I showed her my hands. Then she took some muslin, cut holes for my fingers, sewed strings on the cloth, and put a big piece of fat meat on the inside next to those blisters, so I was all set for the next day, because my hands soon stopped hurting and never bothered me after that. The men wanted to know what was the matter when I came to the field, I told them I tied a cloth on my hands to keep the nib from sticking to my hands. So everything went along all right. I was even made a harvest hand. When Mr. Bender hired me I asked what he was going to pay me, and he said whatever you earn. I didn't think he would give me as much as a man, but when we got the harvest done he said to come in and when we did he said, "George, I am going to give you as much as any of the men," I was a tickled boy because I had done a man's work. I had worked all day covering corn with a hoe and received 25¢ a day because I was a boy under age. I got \$1.25 a day in Harvest and I was mighty proud of it.

When I went home my folks were living in an old farm house about a half a mile from our farm. Our neighbor said we could live there until we could build a new house. I had already told him we wanted to build as I have said we could not get the farm back until the three years were up. When some time later I came home Charley had been hired out to Mr. Fate at Viola. He was running a general store. He paid him \$15, board, room, and laundry. That left mother, my two sisters, and I. I had no team and had to carry the wood that we burned about a fourth of a mile; and the water we drank the same distance. One day one of the neighbors told me If I wanted to get his yoke of oxen to hewl up some wood, I was welcome to use them. They weren't very well broken, but I thought I could use them so he wouldn't charge me anything. I had so much to do before winter and this was

*rest  
not bad  
from  
Maiden  
City  
you*



getting along in fall of the year. In September I was eighteen. I decided to get the ox team because I had driven oxen before. When I was about ten years old I drove a yoke of oxen all day breaking new ground for an old farmer. I worked till dark then he said he had no money so he paid me off with a pound of home made cheese. When he worked for mother about a half a day, he charged her \$10, that's the way those things work out. Now I will go back where I am going to haul drags of wood with that raw yoke of steers. I went out in the woods and cut down about ten or twelve small maple trees and cut them small enough so the steers could pull them. I had a time with those steers. I think it was about the second or third time that they had been yoked. They would back and turn the yoke. I worked patiently with them and got them started for a while. We used to call pulling anything on the ground, "snaking". I had snaked about four or five drags of logs to the yard and just as I was hooking the chain the steers jumped to run away. The chain flipped around my leg and hooked. Away went the steers with me on the end of the chain. You can imagine how a boy would bounce when a wild yoke of steers were running away at full speed, and the ground was frozen. They dragged me about thirty rods. The house was up in the field and they had a gate to the road. As good luck would have it the gate was shut and when the steers came to it they stopped and I will tell the world I wasn't long unhooking the chain. I don't know whether I bounced as high as I thought I did or not. I thought I went about a rod in the air. It didn't hurt me very much except for a few bruises and skinned hands where the chain was around my nuckle. I went to pulling the logs to the yard as if nothing had happened. If that gate had not been shut I would have been torn to pieces, because there was a big stony hill right there. The next morning mother say my hands and my clothes and she asked me what happened. I told her that I had gotten caught in the brush and fell down coming up the hill, and peeled my hands. So that helped out. I had my wood at the house. Then, I went out to carry the water and worked on the log house. As I said, some of the neighbors were cleaning land close to where we wanted to build, and they said that I could have the logs if I wanted to take them from the clearing. I got a new ox and started getting the logs for the new house. I soon had them cut and got some of the neighbors to haul them in where I wanted them, which was on the west side of the middly forty on the road formerly called the Dobson road. We had a well of water there and I got one of the neighbor boys to help me dig a temporary cellar. I had a raising and the men came and raised it about 12 rounds high. Then I had to hurry because winter was coming fast. The ground was frozen then, and it was snowing and we could not stay where we were much longer. I had to gable up the ends, chink and dab it and shingle it and put floors upstairs and down and mover before it got too cold. I worked early and late, but the good Lord favored me with good weather. The last of October I had it completed and we moved. Just a day or two before we moved my three brothers came home from harvesting and they helped us move. The house was real cozy and warm.

After moving I bought a cow from a man by the name of Mr. Collins. Right there we had our milk and butter. That same winter two of my brothers and I started to clear 16 acres of heavy timber. I went to school and helped on Saturdays. I went to school for three months that winter, and that was the last schooling I got. We worked at that clearing that summer and the coming one. When summer came, two of my brothers went to Iowa to a harvesting again. That left my brother James and me to get *it* *John*



that 16 acres in fall wheat. About the first of August we had it ready for plowing. That fall we bought a fine yoke of three year old steers and broke them. We bought them especially to break the new ground. We had a blacksmith to make a single shovel plow. Probably a good many readers never saw a jump shovel breaking plow, so I will tell you what one is: it is a big single shovel plow. The shovel is about 14 inches across the top and the length is about 18 inches running down to a point like a cultivator shovel. The beam is made out of soled oak, I would judge about 6 inches square and about 7 feet long. There is a hole through this beam to put a colter in. Now the colter is 2 feet long and about 5 inches wide and is sharp on one edge and run down inside of the plow to cut the roots and big heavy handles fastened to the beam so it wouldn't break. But these three year old steers were not able to break this new ground with this jump shovel, so we got another yoke of steers and I drove both teams and my brother held the plow.

About the first of September we sewed it in fall wheat and got about 52 bushels per acre and sold the most of it for \$125 a bushel. This was in 1878. That gave us a start. We lived in that log house until the renter's time was up, and then we moved back in our new house. We then sold the cattle and bought a team of horses, and a wagon. We never drove a team of oxen after that. Everything went along nicely. Edward, James, and I all farming together.

About two or three years from this time we bought what we called the Ceaverson place. Two hundred and twenty acres for \$900.00. We cut logs and split rails, then fenced it, so that we could go into the dairy business. We hauled the milk to Viola to a cheese factory.

*(year John died 1881 Sarah)*  
About 1880 my oldest sister got married to H.B. Sergent and the oldest child, Emer, was born in the log house that I built. They lived in that house about two years, and then moved to Viola into a home that they bought.

We were in the dairy business for about five or six years. In that time Edward got married to a girl that lived near Richland Center, Lena Fischer was her name. After we quit the dairying business, we sold the cows and made an underbrush of this 220 acres, which came up in bluegrass. Then we bought some sheep, some cattle, and some more land. This was about 1881. We contracted to furnish lambs for feeders. James and I took charge of this. At this time I was about twenty-two years old. At this same time Edward and his father-in-law, John Fisher went to Idaho to homestead. But they found no suitable land, so they returned and Edward took his part of the Swerson place and moved on it and built a new home near a big spring.

Everything went along fine. We were farming and buying stock for several years. About 1893, James got married to a girl that lived on a small farm about two miles south of Kickpoo Center, Wisconsin. Her name was Lucy Smith. Then James and I built a new house for mother and me to live in about two rods east of where the old house stands now.

About a year after this while mother and I were living alone, I went to church at Sugar Grove because my girl friend was there. She sent word with her brother that she wanted me to come and take her home. The night before it had snowed about six inches. I had my boy roadsters sharp



shod all around steel centered and a brand new sleigh. It was the first time I had had it hitched, for this was the first snow. I went there and got my girl friend. It was snowing really hard, but my girl friend wanted to go to a party with some other young folks, and she promised to find room in the barn for the team. I said that I would stay awhile, but not all night for my mother was all alone and not feeling very well. In fact, she didn't want me to go at all. She had said, "I don't want you to go." I said, "Why don't you want me to go?" She said, "Well, do as you like, but if you do go you'll be brought back a cripple." She said that she would wait up until I came home. I said, "Mother, I think that's all imagination. I will hurry back." That was one reason. It was snowing so hard that I hated to drive my nice horses in such a blinding snow. But sure enough I did come back a cripple. About two o'clock in the morning I had one of the boys take my team home, and mother was waiting for me. She had not gone to bed. But that was the first time I had ever disobeyed her. I sent word with the boys to bring the bobsled and put straw in a box so they could haul me home. Well, when we got to the girl's uncle's place after church, I asked him if he had a place for my team, and he said that he did if the horses would stand together. I thought that they would. So we unhooked them from the sleigh and there was one narrow stall--just room enough for one horse. But I thought I could squeeze them in as I did not intend to stay long. I thought maybe it would quit snowing soon. I got them in this narrow stall, and was giving one of them some hay, when a chicken flew on one of the horse's back and the horse jumped on top of my back with those sharp steel centered shoes. The first blow knocked me unconscious, and broke the lantern into a thousand pieces. There I was unconscious and under a wild horse. The boys later said that I was under this wild horse for five minutes. Then finally, I came too, and crawled to one side of the stall. I crawled to the manger, climbed to the top of it, and because I had not said anything the boys thought I was dead. The horse came to the manger to get me, I could even hear his teeth snap. Then I caught my breath enough to say, "Back, Seal." Then the boys were surprised because I spoke and showed them that I wasn't dead. But when the horse heard me say, "Back", he broke loose and started back to the door with his tail up over his back and snorting like a wild broncho. I said, "Don't let that horse get out." So they stopped him. When he came back he shook all over and snorted. Then I got down off of the manger some way--I don't know how, and started to walk across the barn. I took one step and discovered that I was not stepping on my foot, but on my ankle bone. I then began to get blind and said, "Come and get me boys." I was sick, but I did not faint. The two boys carried me to the house. My foot was sticking out to the side of my leg and the only thing that was holding it was the skin. I had on a new pair of shoes, and because my foot was just hanging there, I asked one of the boys to take that one shoe off. He couldn't get it off so I became angry and pulled it off. It looked like I was pulling my foot off.

I asked the boys if they would take my team and hitch it to the sleigh and go to Viroga and get Dr. Gott. I knew that I was really hurt. They went down to the barn to get the horses and the sleigh, but they returned and said that they were afraid to get the horses out. I made fun



of them, so one of the boys said, "I'll bring them out and hitch them to the sleigh or break their necks." So they finally got them hitched up. The horses were snorting all of the time. They weren't gone long, though, when they returned without Dr. Gott, but with a man by the name of Randall. I asked them why they didn't go to Viroga to get Dr. Gott. They said the horses were cutting up and storming so that they did not want to go. Randall said that the bone was broken and that he could set it just as well as the doctor could. I don't believe he ever set a bone on a human being before, or even set a bone that was out of place, he was probably just an amateur veterinarian. I told him that I wanted him to do a good job of it, and if he undertook to set my ankle and didn't do a good job of it, I would send him to the full extent of the law. By that time, my foot was very sore. It had been about two hours since I was hurt. I asked him what he was going to give me, chloroform or ether, because I felt that I couldn't stand the setting. He said that he didn't have anything to give me, but he thought that a young man like me should be able to stand the mere setting of a bone. So I acquiesced and said, "Go ahead."

He got me into a big rocking chair and told me to stick my foot out, and then he began pulling. He pulled me across the room. Then he told one of the boys to hold my chair. Then he got a couple of boys at the back of the chair and a couple with him and they all pulled. There they were see-sawing. They could not set it that way. So Randall told them to bring a bed out of the sitting room. They then tore down the old-fashioned bed that had slats on it. They laid me on those slats, put a strap across my chest, one across my hips, and buckled me down so I could not move. Then they rammed my foot through the rounds at the foot of the bed. About four held the bed to keep it from pulling around and about four helped the doctor pull on my foot. They pulled me and the bed around about three or four times, and kept that up for about an hour, and finally he said, "It's set." I said, "Doc, I'm awful sick, can't you give me something?" He said he did not have anything but a little arnecia to rub on my ankle. Doc went home and so did all the young folks of the party. I sent one of the boys home with my team to tell my folks to come and get me at Sugar Grove. The doctor left me with a broken ankle, only half bandaged and no splints at all. The party had been gone only a short while, when my jaws were set like a vise. There was no one there except the man and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins. I had lock-jaw, and I did not know what to do. I began to pray. Some divine power came over me and told me what to do. I did it, and my jaws loosened right away. Mrs. Hopkins was passing through the room and I beckoned her to come to the bed, then I whispered to her, asking her if she had any cian pepper. She said that she did and I whispered to her, and I told her to get a pint cup and fill it two-thirds full of cian pepper and then fill the cup with water and let it steep. I waited about an hour and then motioned for her to bring it. It had boiled down to a thin syrup. I drank it, and immediately my jaws limbered. The reader may think this story is unreasonable and impossible but it is a fact. I always called it a miracle, as there is nothing impossible with God.

The boy drove my team home and gave them the news that I was crippled. Mother had never gone to beg, knowing that her prophecy would come true. It wasn't long until James and mother came to me that same night. They had a bob sled and a wagon box of hay for me to lie on. I suffered agony on the way home that night, as every jolt almost threw my ankle out of place again. When we got home James carried me into the



house, and put me in bed. I didn't sleep at all that night and mother had to stay up with me. My foot would cramp and twist, so she had to rub it to ease the pain. I stayed in bed about two months. When I got up I had to use crutches, and after I began walking on them a week or two the people and neighbors who came in to see me said my foot wasn't set right. So I got my horse and sleigh and started out for Veroga to have Dr. Gott examine my ankle. The snow by this time was two feet deep and most of the roads were drifted up and blocked, so I had to go by the way of Viola. Just as I was leaving Viola, I met a man driving a team with a big load of hay. He could not drive out of the road and neither could I. It was my place to give the road so I drove my horse in front of his and said, "Mr. I'm a cripple and I would be ever so much obliged if you would break the road so I could get out of the road, and then you would be able to get by." He got off the load of hay, tramped the snow down for me, and I got by. I pulled my horse out of the main road into the deep snow, and went back in the main road. Just as I was going back into the main road, the sleigh tipped over, and my crutches, robes, and I fell out. The horse was scared and he started to run away, but I hung on. He dragged me about eight or ten rods, so when I stopped him, the man helped me back into the sleigh, and we started again. I was pretty sore at the horse by this time. It seemed as if he tried to kill me twice, and didn't succeed. I wasn't going to have any sympathy for him. So I gave him the lines, and we went along hitting the high places. Everything went along all right until we came to the railroad crossing. The sleigh struck the rails on an angle and over we went again. I had to hang on to the horse again and this time he dragged me for two blocks. I saw a man standing close by, so I asked him to bring me my robe, cushions, and crutches. Then we started again.

We finally got to Dr. Gott's office, but he was not there. Soon he came in, with a big Norwegian. The doctor told me that I would have to wait. It was all right with me, I was in no hurry. The doctor got this big man on the operating table. The man wouldn't let the doctor give him any ether or chloroform; he said that he could stand it all right. The doctor asked me to hold the man's head down. I locked my hands around his head and all of the squirming, and hollering that he did nearly raised the roof. Sometimes he would raise the weight of my whole body off the floor. After he had finished with him, he told him to come back in a week. Then he was ready for me. He started unwrapping my foot, and I thought he never would finish. Mother had tied rags around my foot, and it looked like an old-fashioned churn. Finally he got it unwrapped. I told him that I didn't think it was set right, and I wanted him to reset it. He told me that it was set all right, but that it wasn't wrapped right. There should have been a plaster cast put on my foot instead of rags. He fixed it then and told me to stay off of my foot for six months. I told him that I couldn't stay off of it for six months because we were running a farm and we were feeding a carload of steers. He told me that if I didn't stay off of my foot, I would through it wout of place, and I would never be able to keep it in place again. He told me to sell the farm, and get something else to do.



I went home that afternoon without a single accident, but I did not take the doctor's advice. I had to work, so I naturally I fell several times and each time I sprained my ankle, or hurt it in some way. I kept on that way for about two years. Sometimes I had crutches, and sometimes I didn't. My ankle got worse all the time, and it was turning black. I was afraid of blood poisoning, so I went to Dr. Delap at Richland Center. He, too, told me I would have to sell my farm.

In 1895, I sold my interest in the old farm to my brother, James, then I went to West Lima, Wisconsin and Johnnie Hurless and I bought a General Merchandise store from Jake Potts. It was the only store of that kind in town. It had hardware, clothing, boots, shoes, dry goods, and groceries. So I was in the store business about three years. In 1896, I married to a girl by the name of Ada Burt. Soon after I bought the store I was troubled with indigestion. I was run down, and I lost a great deal of weight. When I bought the store, I weighed 140 pounds; when I sold the store I weighed 100 pounds. I got so weak and run down, that I would faint every day and sometimes it would take a long time to bring me to. I went to see Dr. Delap again and he said I would have to sell the store because it was too much of a confinement for me. I spent from 15 to 18 hours in the store a day. There was a cheese factory in town and the farmers would come early with their milk and do all of the chores by lantern light, so we had to get up early to get the early trade and stay in late to catch the late trade. That was just too much. Then we sold the store to Jake Potts again.

In 1899 I went to northern Wisconsin in Chippawa County. Afterwards this county was divided. The southern part was called Rusk County. I was then in Rusk County. I weighed less than a hundred pounds when I went North. In less than a year I was back to my normal weight. In April, 1899 five neighbors and I took a covered wagon and went into Northern Wisconsin, and I found the land that I bought. The 12th of April, I chartered a car and moved my household goods and a horse team, and two cows to New Aurbin, 16 or 17 miles from Island Lake, where my land was. New Aurbin was as close as I could get to the land by rail at that time. I had to haul all of my household goods and stock from West Lima, to Hillsboro, Wisconsin and then ship it to New Aurbin. We got to New Aurbin the same day at about four o'clock, in the worst storm I have ever seen. I had two hired men with us. When we got to the station, a friend met us, and took us to his house. My brother, Edward was living at Island Lake at that time. He went up there about one year before I did. I had written him I would be there at that time and to send his men to come and get a load of goods. It was storming so I did not think he would come, but about dark here comes his man and he wanted to take us to Lake that night. I told him it was too stormy, and it was almost impossible to go. We had two babies, one six months old, and the other less than two years. My wife wasn't feeling very well either. The man pleaded with us to go because he said my brother would not like it if we did not go. He said that he had a good train, and it would not take long to drive it. He said he had lots of



hay in the sled box and lots of wraps so I said I would leave it to what my wife said. She decided to go that evening. It was about five o'clock. I left the two men to stay with the horses and cows. We had not gone very far, when the blizzard got so bad that the horses could not face it. I told the man to crowd the horses, and force them to go, and I would double his pay. He said he was doing his best. He would get us through some way but this was out in the open land, where there was no timber. Then we came to a hard wood belt, and that was not so bad. To keep warm, I lay down on my back and took the oldest boy, Otto, and laid him on my chest and spread a blanket over us and covered our hearts and stayed in that position all night, or till we got to Island Lake. It was twelve o'clock when we got to my brother Edward's place. I lay in that position seven hours with this baby on my chest. When we got there my brother had to carry me in the house. I was so numb and paralyzed I could not walk. We found that on top of the blanket there was 18 inches of snow. That day was April 12, and that day and night it snowed three feet and two inches.

The next day my brother and I got our team and sleds ready to go back to get a load of my stuff. We took shovels along because the roads were all drifted full, some places ten to fifteen feet high. We started early and it was night when we got to New Aurbin. We stayed all night and the next morning I hired a man by the name of Burpy to help me with my load. He had a big team of horses. I think they would have weighed about a ton a piece. He had one of those big logging sleds, the rack was twelve feet wide and eighteen feet long. His load looked like a house moving. His load and my brother's load and mine took all I had in the car except the cows and the two men drove them through.

When we got to Island Lake I had no place to put it so I stored it in an old boat on Island Lake. I took the men, the third day, to where I wanted to build. The carpenter measured the snow where it had not drifted, and it measured three feet two inches. We made a big snow plow. We took two, two inch boards twelve inches wide and twelve feet long. We beveled the ends of the boards and bolted them together and spiked a board the same width in the center like the letter X. We then hitched two teams on the snow plow and two or three rode it. The horses could not pull it more than two or three rods at a time until we had to rest them. We finally got a road to my land, and my two men got to work. Within a week we were moving my goods from the old boat. The old boat was frozen in the lake. I wanted to get my goods out before the ice broke. I had the house built twelve by fourteen. I afterwards used it as a smoke house. The way we put up so quickly, we put up the frame, boarded up and down, bated the cracks and papered with building paper around the studding and laid a rough floor. It turned awfully cold, and I almost froze to death before it got warm. That was the latest spring I ever saw.

We found a lot of fine timber, that the wind had blown down a good many years before. The most of this timber was very good, but it was under three feet of snow. We could see a rise in the snow where the trees



trees lay and we would take shovels and shovel the snow away and saw the trees into logs. A company by the name of Dell Brothers bought them on the banks of Potato Creek. I sold as good a soft white pine as ever was grown for six dollars a thousand in the log. We had only to skid them a short distance. We did this all through April and spring.

On election day I took a load of neighbors to Bruce Wisconsin in my sled. It was fine sleighing. It was the first and last time I ever went to spring election on a sleigh.

When we were cutting up those wind falls I ran out of money because this company did not scale the logs when they agreed to. I had about \$100 worth of logs on the ground at that time and my brother said he had six dollars. He said that was all he had so I said, "Let me have it and I will go to Bruce and get six dollars worth of grub and divide it. I know that the company will scale the logs soon." I had two babies, a wife, and two hired hands, a team, and two cows. I had no hay, no grain, no flour, no nothing at that time. They did not come to scale my logs and there I was in a strange country with a deep snow on the ground. My brother gave me the six dollars and on the way home I lost them. I took the two men that morning with lanterns and looked on both sides of the road up and back two or three times and could not find it. I told my wife I would have to go to Bruce and try to get some credit until the company would come and scale my logs. My wife felt bad, because she knew that I didn't know anything or anybody up there, and she didn't think it was any use to try. I said, "I'm going." "Where there's a will, there's a way." Then I put the saddle on my horse and started to Bruce, Wisconsin. After I had gone a little way, I began thinking of my condition, and of my circumstances--two babies, a wife, two hired men to pay, a team of horses, two cows to feed, and no money, and in a strange country. The tears rolled down my cheeks. I said to myself that this wouldn't do. Don't get discouraged, everything will be all right. I had not gone far until I saw two men coming down the road, driving a team of horses. I said "Good morning, I'm a stranger, one of the newcomers that came from southern Wisconsin. I am located on so-called Norwegian land." He told me he knew where it was, and that he had logged all over that part of the country. I told him my business and told him I was skidding on the Potato Creek, and that I had a contract with Dell Brothers to buy all of my logs, and that they had failed to keep their contract. I told them that I wanted to buy some hay on credit. He said that he would sell me some, and I could pay him when I sold my logs. His name was Sanders. He lived in the New Hutchison country. I had never been there so he told me how to find it. He told me to come any time.

The very next day I went over there and got a load of hay. Timothy hay, it lasted until I scaled my logs and then I want to pay him, and I thanked him for his kindness. He told me that was all O.K. and was glad to see new comers come and settle up the country. He told me to come over any time and he would do all he could to help me out. I got acquainted with the New Hutchison neighbors and found a lot of very nice people and made many good friends.



Although I had hay for my stock, I had no food for my family. So I went to Bruce to try to buy some food on credit. I tried the first store I came to, hitched my team and went in and a clerk came to me and sked what he could do for me. When he came, I told him my name was Matthes, and that I lived down near Island Lake. I told him I was one of the new comers and was cutting logs and had a lot cut and sold to Dell Brothers, but they did not come and scale them when they agreed to. The proprietor looked at me for a while, and then he told me that I looked like an honest man, and told his clerk to let me have what I wanted, I then loaded up a big supply of groceries and when I was about to start home, he said for me to come back and told his clerk to let me buy on time anytime I came in and needed anything. He gave me tickets for what I bought and I traded with him that way about two months. I told my wife I was going to count up and see just how much I owed him. It was \$80.00 and he had never asked for it nor sent me a statement so I got my logs scaled, and felt pretty good. I got a check for over two hundred dollars, so I could pay my debts. I drove to Bruce and walked into the store as big as you please, threw the check in the pigeon hole, and told him to take out what I owed him and also interest. But he told me that He wouldn't charge interest, because he had already made one profit, and one was enough. I thanked him for his kindness and for trusting me when I needed it. He told me that was all right and to come enytime and get anything I wanted, that he appreciated my trade. I never saw that man after that day. He was a sickly man, and died a short time later. I have forgotten that merchant's name, but will always have a warm spot in my heart for him.

Then I had plenty of money to put in a small garden, and pay my men and we planted about five acres of corn. The neighbors said it was no use to plant corn, because it was too far north. The frost would bite it before it would get ripe. I planted it just the same, and the frost didn't even bother it. I had a dandy field of corn. People would come from miles around to look at it. People said, "You sure had good luck." When I came and bought that land in 1899 my brothers were the only neighbors that were close. One lives  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile away and the other about four miles. But wasn't a year from that time until I had a neighbor on all sides of my land. By my raising that good crop of corn and building a big double farm house, I induced emigration to this place. I had the best house there was in the neighborhood. Most all of the houses in the country were just rough log houses daubed with mud. When those new settlers came, most of them built frame houses. Things went a little better from then on. The land all around there belonged to land speculators. The people were waiting for someone to open it up and see what it would grow. They did not think corn would get ripe. People would come and look at my house as if it were a sky scraper, because it was a very rare thing to see anything but a log house at that time. The land speculators said they sold more land after I was there about a year than they had sold the last ten years previous.

In 1902, I saw that a lot of children were not going to school. I told my brother to send his children to school, but he said it was too far for them to walk. I asked him why he didn't go to the board and have a new district struck off and have a new school house built, or either have them furnish transportation for the children. He said that he had seen them and they said that if they didn't want to walk or come anyway they could just stay at home. I told him that the school code said that if your children lived over two miles from the school district, the board had to haul them to and from school. I told him I would see about it. I jumped



on my pony and covered the district and found that thirty-seven children of school age weren't going, and none of them were any closer than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the school house. I went over to the Indian reservation and found their children were all within two miles, then I went to the school board and told them the circumstances. I told them I would make them see that those children be in school, and that they should furnish transportation for them. They told me that when they first came, there wasn't many schools and their children had to walk about four miles, and that our children weren't any better than their's. I told them that was probably a fact, but that wasn't any reason why our children should be deprived of an education simply because their children were when they were young. I told them that I was at the Indian Reservation and found that their children were within the limit and they were going to school. I asked him if our children weren't as good as the Indians. I told him that I knew he was violating the law, and if he didn't do something about it, I would write to the superintendent and have him start action against them. He told us that if we started bringing the law on this, they would law us to death. I told him that was all right with us, but we heard no more about that.

I came home and I wrote to the superintendent and told him all about it, and told him about the attitude of the board. He told me not to mention anything to the board, that he would write them. He told us that when it came time for a school meeting that we neighbors should have a school meeting of our own, and elect officers and pick out a site for our children to go to school. That we should build a school there and make the district pay for it. I went around and notified the neighbors and we held the first meetings at one of the neighbor's home. The elected me and a few others as members of the school board. I was to be the clerk.

The next morning after we had our new school meeting, I looked up the road and saw a man driving a fine span of boy roadsters. He came out where I was working, but I did not pay much attention to him. He asked me why I didn't come to the school meeting and I told him that we had a better one of our own. He said that he had gotten a letter from the superintendent stating that if they did not strike us a new district that they would have to pay for the new school house that was going to be build. After that, they struck off the district for our school and we had no more trouble from them. I live about one mile from the new school. One of the neighbors gave one acre of land about the center of the district, but I gave him \$1 for consideration to make it lawful. We built the new school in 1903. This was the largest and nicest school house ther was in the country at that time. It stands to this very day. I went by there in 1933 and it looks as good as it ever did. The little trees we planted are real large trees and the lapse of thirty years did not harm the place.

None of my old neighbors are living now. When I was down there I saw my old farm, but it did not look very natural. They had cut down my sugar bush, that I made maple sugar from when I was there. At that time, I would make enough maple sugar and syrup to last the family a year and would sell about \$100.00 worth a year. If I would have stayed there it would never have been cut down. The stumps that I plowed around were gone and



it looked like a prairie compared to when I was there. The buildings look quite unnatural. They told me the house had not been painted since I painted it 29 years ago, and the man that was with me said it looked like it had not been painted more than one year. Well, I was only in northern Wisconsin for ten years. I went in the 1899, and left in 1908, the year my wife died. I was in Rusk County about ten years and in that time I worked at logging, cutting my own logs, and buying stumps or buying the timber of company timberland and cutting the timber off. In the summer months I would clear the land and get the land ready for crops. When I went on that land, in the spring of 1899 there was not a sign of an improvement, not even a board, and about one acre<sup>s</sup> a person could plow. When I sold it in the fall of 1908, I had an eight room frame house, 3 big log barns, a log chicken house, and a double corn crib with a wagon shed between the two. I was cultivating about fifty acres when I sold out. Of course, I was plowing around lots of stumps at that time, but there isn't any there now, and they can't even cultivate one acre. I always kept one man hired by the year and a girl also. In the winter, I ran a small logging crew about four men and a man with a team. I also ran my own team that weighed about two tons. The log never grew too big in that country that I could not skid with. I had 160 acres of land and did not owe one cent on it. When I went away I had a written recommendation from all of the banks and merchants. When I went to that country, I had money enough to pay for my land of 120 acres, which cost me \$500.00, and I borrowed \$300.00. My wife died, as I have already told you, in 1908, and left me four small children. The oldest one eleven years old, and the year she died with typhoid fever, she was sick from eight to ten months. I got two graduate nurses from Madison, Wisconsin, and that cost me ten dollars a day and night. The doctor came from Weyerhauser, Wisconsin about seven miles from my place. He came over once a day and at nights too. This cost me \$5.00 a trip. On the whole, my own time in the field, and about \$22.00 a day, were my expenses while my wife was sick. When she died leaving me with four children, I could not stay up in Northern Wisconsin any longer, because I couldn't raise my children and do justice to them. Then I moved to Seldina, Wis. and sent to Missouri for my half sister to come and help me with the children. I don't think I would ever have left that country if my wife would have lived. For there, I had good land, was making plenty of money, and was known by all land speculators.

I intended to buy a small piece of land from my father-in-law, T. P. Burt, but he would not sell me a foot of his land. That was my wife's wish on her death-bed, that her children be close to her mother. I told them what her request was, but they still would not do it. I told them Then I bought 120 acres of Johnathan Gift, and his son's name is Leroy. We went into partnership. It took a big loss in that deal, because we could not agree, and we dissolved the partnership. My half sister got sick and she had to go to her daughters and left alone again. So I sold the land at Taforge and the two younger children went to their grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. T. P. Burt, at Westlina, Wis. I rented a house there for the children to go to school.



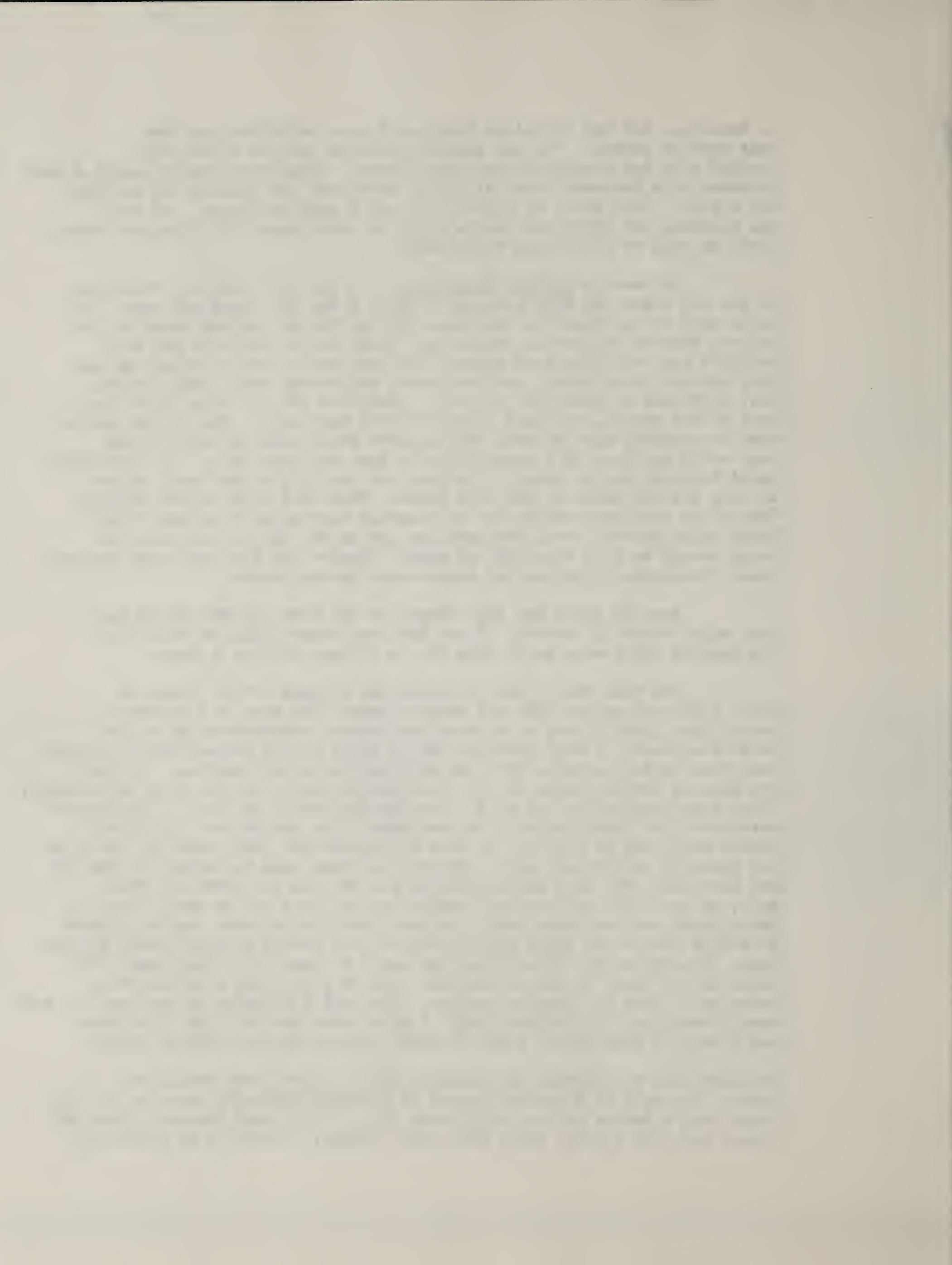
in Westlins, and the two older boys and I went to Balched and the boys went to school. The two younger children went to school and I clothed them and furnished them their books. About that time I bought a half interest in a hardware store with Mark Shuckhart and sold out in one year and a half. Then Burt, my oldest son, and I went to Canada. My son was sixteen, and about six months after we were there, the other son came. After he came we were there three years.

We were in British Columbia and in all the Canadian Provinces. We got big wages, as high as eight dollars a day and board and room. We would work in the farms in the summer and go to the logging camps in the winter, because the farmers would turn their horses loose on the wild prairies and would paw down through the snow and get the bunch grass and they stacked their straw, and the horses ran around those straw stacks. That kept lots of storm off of them. They also ate it. That cost them lots of the stacks, but they were not worth very much. Then in the spring when they wanted them to work the farmer's would have to round up and they would run them in a correll, claim them by their brand. Those ranchers would hire one man to stay on the farm and would give him small wages to keep the ice broke in the sink holes. They call them buffalo wallows. They claim when the buffalo was so numerous they paved those holes out. Those holes were all over the prairies and in the fall of the year, it rains enough to fill them full of water. That's why they call them by that name. The storks drink out of those holes in the winter.

Some of those men that stayed on the farm and did chores made good wages shooting coyotes. They had long range rifles at that time. The coyotes hides were worth from ten to fifteen dollars a piece.

One time when I was in Canada the morning of the fourth of July, I got out my old fife and began playing. We were in a sleeping house right close to his house this was before breakfast and he called us to breakfast. I said what will we do today go and harness the horses and turn them in the pasture. Then we will go fishing and hunting. I heard you playing some of those old familiar pieces that I used to hear in Missouri. I was born in Missouri, he said. This is the fourth of July. I have never celebrated the fourth since I've been here. The people don't like the fourth here, but we will go. I just telephoned and there were four or five car loads of people here soon. Pretty soon they came so wenwent to the old Men River, and the boys seemed to like it, but did not catch any fish. Well, he said, "We will go wolf hunting so we drove out on the praire." I think there were six ford cars. We saw a bunch of coyotes and we planned to circle them so we began driving around in a circle getting closer all the time. Finally we got close enough to start to shout the first shot. They broke by the cars. I was in the back seat of a car with a 32 repeating rifle and a lady was driving the car. She said I am going to run over it, and when I catch up with it "Shoot it!" I shot about two boxes of cartridges, and I think I came within a rod of them, because the road was so rough.

The lady that was driving was laughing all the time I was trying to shoot. She said if I couldn't catch it shooting she would run over it. It would jump sideways and she would miss it. I don't know how many times she almost ran over it, but would miss it, of course, I was out of shells by



by that time. That fourth of July was awfully hot and the wolf was hot and tired, so it went into a hole, and that ended our wolf hunt. So Mr. Bailey was the man of the Mays. I was working for him in Canada, Alberta Province, said, "Well, boys, beings we did not have very good luck hunting coyotes, and fishing we will have to go again.

Mr. Bailey knew where a nest of young coyotes were. They were about half grown, and we would have to dig them out of the ground. We gathered up our shovels, and picks, and all kinds of tools to dig with and jumped in our old ford and started out. We drove about twenty miles our on the prarie, and he said there they are. I looked in that direction and saw two old ones and about six or eight young ones, so we ran the car over and they ran in the ground and the dogs took after the old ones, but no luck in catching them. It takes a mighty good dog to catch a coyote. No common dog has any business with them. We went to digging and dug about six or eight feet till we came to where they were. The hole was about two feet across. They were all in a pile, but were digging when we came to them. He said, "Mr. Bailey, reaching and get one, they won't bite." He pulled them all out. I said to Mr. Bailey to call in the dogs and have a good race. So they held the dogs until the coyotes got a little start then they left the dogs go. But the young wolf would not run. So I grabbed it, so the dogs would not kill it. Mr. Bailey put them all in the car, and took them home because his brother wanted them. He said by keeping the young ones around he would also get the old ones. He kept them a while and the old ones kept howling around the barn and could not get the old ones. He got tired of fooling with them and killed them and never did get the old ones.

We worked for Mr. Bailey until the harvest came and the drouth and hot winds destroyed his wheat and he could not hire us any longer. When we went to Canada we were hired out to a farmer in Medicin Hat to help farm four sections of land. We worked for him until harvest, and he would not give us what we wanted for wages so we went to Ritlaw in the northern part of Alberta. I had an old friend there, Bird Poorman, and we went there and helped him in his rye as his wheat was not ready to harvest. When the wheat was ready we hired out to this farmer which was farming five sections. We helped him through harvest then went north to Calgara, Canada, and bought a job in British Columbia. It was a logging job. A fine place to work, and good eats. We worked all winter for that company and in spring we came back to Ritlaw again and worked there a while and there wheat was a failure. We then came back to the U.S. to the state of Washington. We worked there a while in packing prunes, then we came to Wanschie, Washington, and contracted to pick his apples at seven cents a bushel then that winter we hired out in the mountains in an apple box factory. All summer and there that is where my youngest son drowned. It was in the year 1919 in July. We had his body embalmed and took it back West Lima, Wis. and laid it beside his mother. I almost died on the train between Wanatschie, Wisc. and St. Paul, Minn. I broke down with nervous prostration and heart trouble. When we got to St. Paul, the Doctor told me I was in a critical condition. He gave me some medicine and I got a little better, and managed to get through to West Lima. I had written my

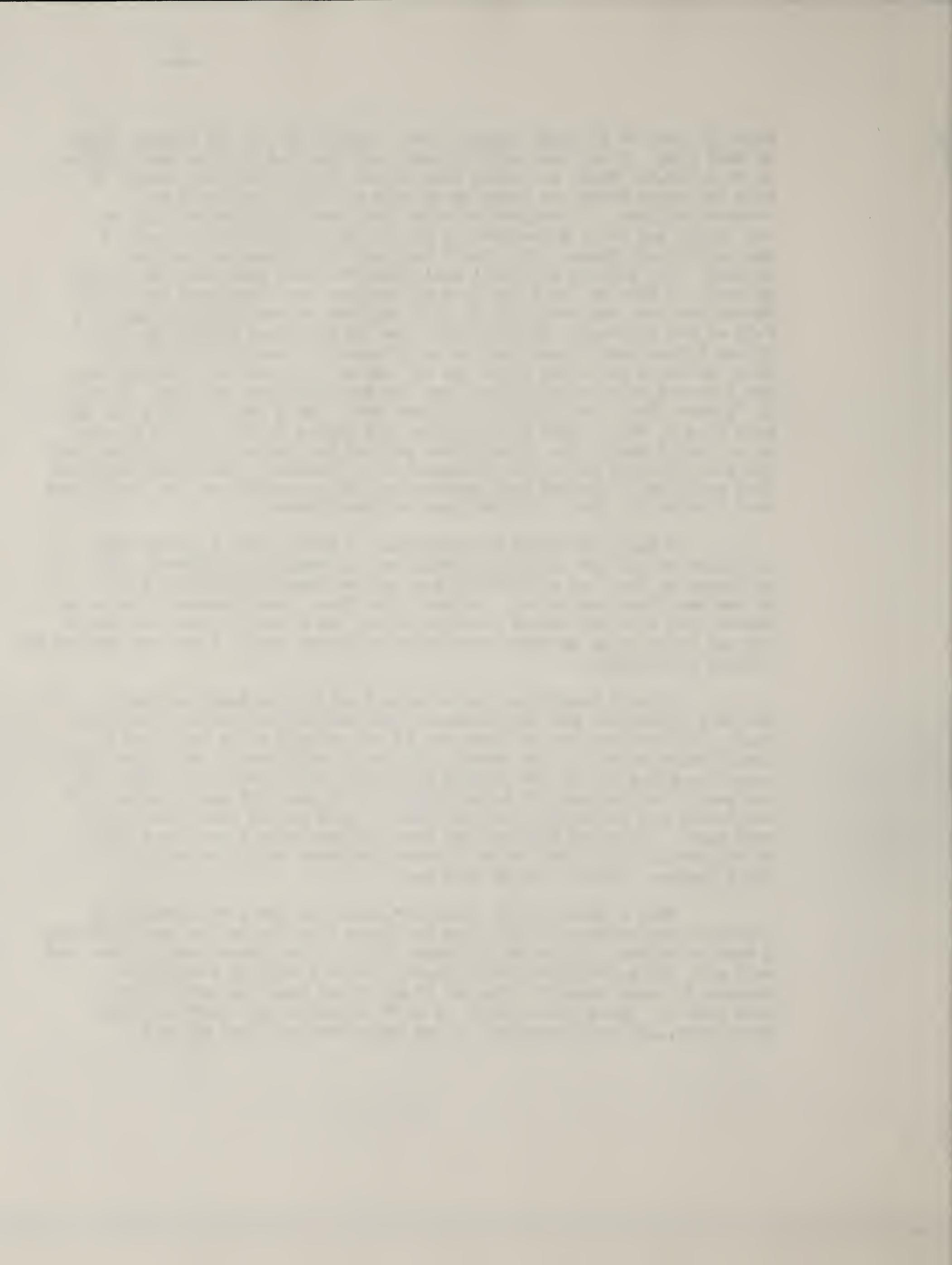


folks to meet me at Union Center, Wis., because it was the closest point to West Lima. I met them at 8 o'clock, and then had to ride twenty miles on th U.P.R.R. There was about four nights that I could not sleep. I know one thing about ten years of my life was lost, and about two thousand dollars. I couldn't write or feed myself, so after I got my son buried and got a tombstone for him, I went back to Washington. I was making good wages, but I could not stay there where my son was drowned. The doctors told me I would have to leave there and get it off my mind; I felt so bad I had lost my youngest son. His name was Lester George Matthes, was born July 5, 1903, and was drowned July 11, 1920. I felt so bad and wasn't fit for work. We had 160 acres of land in the Nithow Valley, and I knew that we would have to loose it, and all the money we spent and I was sick. My son and I, the son that was drowned, had intended to go on this farm, and now everything was spoiled. I was in Spokane, Wesh. at that time without work, and I felt so bad I did not know what to do. I went in my bedroom and prayed to the Lord to direct me in what I should do. I continued praying for three or four nights, and the Lord directed me to come to Kansan City, Missouri, and I told the boys Otto and Burt. I kissed them good-bye and they promised me they would come when I wrote for them. I first came to Independence.

I had a cousin in Independence. I heard about a barber shop in Grandview and then I went to Grandview. I bought that barber shop, and wrote to Bert, my next oldest son, and he came the third of June. He has been here ever since. At that time when I was directed to come to Kansas City everybody was a stranger to me, and I didn't have much money. Now all three of my children are living in Kansas City. I can see them in ten minutes at any time.

After I bought the barber shop I sold it to Bert and then I put in a resteraunt and confectionary, and was in that business for four years. My business was so large and it was working me so hard that my health began to fail. The doctors told me I would have to sell out. I opened up about six in the morning and closed about twelve at night. So you see it was too much of a hardship for a 66 year old man to stand. It was Sunday and every day with not rest. I sold out in 1926, when times were good. I cleared \$1500.00 and then the next year I went on a visit to Wisconsin, and by the way of Fremont, Nebraska to get my sister Emily Hurless, and had her go with me.

When I came back to Grandview, Mo. I bought a resteraunt and confectionary at Hickman Mill, and was there only two months, and sold out. I went to Molburro, a suburb of Kansas City. I was there about a year, and sold out. My soon-in-law, Frank Beebe, put in a filling station on highway 71, near Granview. We had it about one year and sold it with a good profit. That was in 1929. I sent to Belton and bought a small home there, and still have it. I had bees there and they all got



diseased and died. I was there about three and a half year. I made my home with my son, Bert. Mar. 1, 1932 I came to Kansas City, and have been making my home with my son O. H. Matthes ever since. I am now living at 36 and Blue Ridge Boulevard, Kansas City, Missouri. This is Jan 2, 1934.

January, 1934, and it is the coldest is has been in years. It has been 17 degrees above zero this winter, no snow, and now rain to speak of. I got nine swarms of bees the first of December, 1933 for \$20.00. I retired when I came to Kansas City, in 1932, and haven't done much since except a little light work.

I have been in the grocery, hardware, clothing, confectionary, restaurant business. I have been in the state 16 years, and have not been sick nor have I had a bad cold. I am feeling fine at the present time. This is the 5 of April, 1937.

George Matthes  
36 and Blue Ridge R3  
Kansas City, Missouri



George Mathes, brother of  
C. F. Mathews - his history tells dates,  
different moves of family, I shall  
insert information I know from  
visits with my father James (bro. of above)  
and my brother Dewey.

My birthplace and former home (original  
homeplace of Andrew and Elizabeth + family)  
Dewey has original deed of 120 acres  
signed by Franklin Pearce - Pres. of U.S.  
at that time - Dewey says it will be  
handed down to me, someday.

John died 1880, buried at Old Hopewell  
Cemetery. Dewey tells me, and I've heard  
my father relate "how strong John <sup>(physically)</sup> was  
& clearing land, but hard work shortened  
his life"

Page 3

Much of old sugar camp still intact

Page 4

Uncle Charley (C.F.) continued Ginseng  
on Mt. Nebo.



Page 5

Grandma wanted to go to Utah and her religion - the urge must have been great for such an adventure with all children - my father & Aunt Emily talked of this.

Page 6

Those freight wagons (wagon train) notice boys walked (C. F. - James - Ed, John & George).

Page 8

The disappointment of Utah - real sad - so I was always told, but Uncle George never liked the Mormons - my father James and he would argue over this - my father worked on temple at Salt Lake and I am sure C. F. did same.

On page 10 - you see Uncle Geo. bitter to Mormons - my father said "Grandma did not want to raise his sister's Emily & Sarah as she did not agree with phase of Mormon religion of "all wives" - Grandma Matthes after all was a Virginian and loved rest of the beauty of Mormon religion.



Page 10

Uncle Ges gets confused on bottom of page, he does go back & tell about 3 getting off at Maiden City, Iowa to walk home & harvest wheat (James, John and Ed) my father James, (I've often heard him tell about it) their hands were raw from "crossing" wheat - My bro. Dewey took my father when he was 80 yrs. old back to Maiden City, Iowa & re-traced their route home, my father had a good memory, & found many of old places.

Page 13

My father started his farming, etc on the homestead, C. F. working with Tate in Viola getting started as merchant, druggist, etc

Page 14

Grandma Matthes lived very peaceful and well provided for, rest of her life on original land, Grandpa brought her to, I was born in old house, about 3 city blocks from Grandmothers home - she used (so my father, Aunt Emily & rest told) to rock on her porch, talk to herself, "how she had raised her children and they were all too busy thinking of making money"



Page 27

We were all at Leslie's funeral - I remember it well - also Uncle Henry's funeral - I'm sure Lulu, your mother, daughter of C. F. was also there.

They all went back to simple life, close to nature in their later life, C. F. to Ginseng & Mt. Nebo, George to his bee raising, & James worked in his grapes & roses until his death.

I hope you save and enjoy - I love nature, working outdoors & fun of our pioneering to Oregon.

Love,

Ruth Mathes Gore.

(Daughter of James)







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